

**SHOW UP  
IN  
THE CITIES**

Week of Prayer  
2024



**GLOBAL YOUTH DAY**  
**MARCH 16-23, 2024**

## SHOW UP: IN THE CITIES

### Urban Redemption

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**Devotional: Worship through Generosity**  
**By: Mwenya Mpundu**

Bible Verse:

Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then, because of this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.  
Deuteronomy 15: 10

Today's devotional will be focused on Deuteronomy 15:4-11. If you can summarize the book of Deuteronomy into one word, it would be the covenant. This book outlines the covenant, or the promises, that bind God and Israel through oaths of fidelity and obedience. In the first three verses of Deuteronomy, we learn about the seven years of release. During this time in Israel, money was always borrowed with the understanding that in the seventh year, there would be a release, the Lord's release. This was God's way of establishing an economic system that would not leave anyone chronically poor. Some might go through a bad period but would have the opportunity to rebuild.

Now read Deuteronomy 15: 4-11 twice.

Four major ideas stood out to me when reading these verses.

Obedience and Blessings Verse 4:

In a world marked by selfishness, scarcity, and need, God's promise stands strong— there should be no lack among His people. The land of our inheritance is not just physical; it's spiritual and communal. As young adults, we must recognize that God's blessings are meant to be shared. When we embrace His generosity, we become instruments of His love, ensuring that His abundance flows through us to reach others. And God promises to continue to bless us.

Your Heart Posture Verse 7:

This verse challenges us to cultivate a generous heart, extending kindness and love to those around us, regardless of their circumstances. In a world that often emphasizes self-sufficiency, God calls us to be different and to think of others. As young adults, we have the opportunity to develop a compassionate spirit, one that sees the struggles of others and responds. Let's choose to respond with empathy over apathy and compassion over indifference.

How to Give: Verses 9-11

These verses emphasize the attitude behind our giving. God delights in a cheerful giver who gives willingly, without resentment. Our actions reflect God's character when we give with a joyful heart. We are also reminded that when we have, we **MUST** give. It is a command, and not doing so would be a sin. As young adults, we're encouraged to embrace a cheerful disposition in our acts of giving—whether it's our time, resources, or talents. This attitude doesn't just benefit the receiver; it transforms us and brings blessings into every area of our lives.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for all that you have blessed us with. Grant us the grace to give without reservation, not only in material things but in our time, talents, and kindness. Teach us to give with joy, without counting the cost, knowing that you see our hearts and promise to bless us in

ways we cannot imagine. We acknowledge that the world will always have needs, and yet we are called to be openhanded in the face of those needs. Give us the strength to be instruments of your love, sharing your blessings generously with those around us.

Amen

## Sermon 1

### Does God Love Your City?

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Matthew 9:36).

#### Introduction

Does God love your city? Today, we are going to try to answer that question. But before we do, let's look at some interesting things about cities. According to some studies, a city is a highly populated and highly organized place that serves as the epicenter of everything: money, culture, politics, and more. Cities are filled with skyscrapers, roads, subways, and a ton of services. Additionally, in cities, there are people from all places and cultures, and they are places where many exciting things happen, such as innovation, education, and work.

Now, let's talk about some of the largest cities in the world:

- Tokyo, in Japan is one of the most populous cities on the planet. It is famous for being highly technological and having a super-cool modern culture.
- New York, in the United States is like the center of everything, with a lot of money, trade, and pop culture.
- London, the capital of England and the United Kingdom is a historic city that still plays a significant role in the world economy and politics.
- Beijing is China's capital and a mega-important place for politics and culture.
- Sao Paulo, Brazil is where everything happens in South America. It has a lot of trade and fun culture.
- Mumbai, India is a growing city and is super important for business.
- Lagos in Nigeria is a major African financial center that has been described as the cultural, financial and entertainment capital of Africa.

Now, what about the emotional issues of people living in cities?

It turns out that living in the city isn't always like it's portrayed in the movies. People in the city can feel stressed because everything moves fast, and traffic can be a mess. Despite being surrounded by a lot of people, some may feel lonely because they lack deep connections with others. Anxiety can also be an issue, as competition and the pressure to succeed can be intense. At times, depression can also be more common in cities because life can be intense.

But here is the good news, ***God loves cities! And, that means He loves the people who live in them, with all their problems and emotions.*** God has a giant heart and is moved when He sees people going through difficult times. So, how does God show His love for the cities? Let's look at three things that demonstrate His love in action.

#### Development

## 1. God Sends Messengers to Cities

Did you know that the first mention of the word city in the Bible was the city that Cain built and named after his son, Enoch (Genesis 4:17, NIV)? It turns out that Enoch came from a family with a history of serious issues. His descendants created cities where some crazy stuff happened, like multiple marriages and murders, but they also were creative with music and art. After a great flood, things did not improve. Noah's grandchildren, specifically the sons of Ham, started building some wicked cities (Genesis 10:6-12, NIV), and the climax was when they built the Tower of Babel with the idea of becoming famous (Genesis 11:4, NIV).

In the Bible, there are several cities, some of the most famous being Babylon, Ur of the Chaldeans, Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh, and Jerusalem. Most of these cities were like the epicenter of evil and sin. But surprisingly, despite all their disasters/problems, God did not give up on them and He sent messengers with a message of compassion, and an opportunity to change. We can read an example of this is the story of Jonah. (Read the book of Jonah).

God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to give them a warning. Now, Nineveh was an extremely violent place filled with wickedness (Nahum 3:1, NIV). So bad, that there is an ancient scroll that says the kings of Nineveh would grab their enemies and literally burn them after stripping off their skin. It was insane!

But despite all their violence and wickedness, God didn't want to give up on them without giving them a chance to change. He sent Jonah, a prophet, to warn them. And you know what? The city of Nineveh responded with repentance (Jonah 3:5-10, NIV).

Did you know that God also wants to see changes and repentance in cities today? That is why He sends messengers! Read what God says through one of His messengers: "As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11, NIV).

But wait, this didn't just happen in ancient times! God still wants to see changes in our cities today. It's like He's saying, "Hey, I don't want to miss out on the good things in your cities. I want you to repent and change for the better."

Think about your own city. It may be full of good things, but it's also likely to have its own issues, problems, crimes, etc. But still, God keeps sending people to your city to show love and say, "Hey, I'm here! Let's change this together."

So, if you ever wonder if God cares about your city, the answer is yes, He does! God wants every city to be a place where people can live in peace, prosperity, and harmony. He's willing to use people like you to make that happen. So, get excited and be part of the change in your city!

So, young people, God is in the business of transforming even the most rebellious and crazy cities. That's love in action!

## 2. God Shows Compassion for Cities

It turns out that God not only sends messengers but also shows great empathy for the people living in those cities, especially when they are going through tough times. Look at this passage from Matthew 9:35-36:

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."(NIV)

And what does it mean to have *compassion*? In short, it means putting yourself in another person shoes and understanding their problems and pains. Yes, God deeply cares about the people in cities, especially when they are going through difficult times!

Imagine this: your city can be a place full of chaos, where it sometimes feels like everyone is lost in the confusion. People may feel lonely, stressed, sick, or are dealing with other issues. But God is there! Jesus Himself moved through the cities, teaching and healing people. When He saw the crowd, His heart was moved. It's like He wanted to say, "Guys, I'm here for you. You're not alone in this."

The next time you feel overwhelmed by everything happening in your city, remember that God understands you. He empathizes with you and everyone else. No matter how messy the world may feel, God is willing to be there and take care of us. That's pure love in action!

### **3. God Transforms Cities**

So far, we've talked about how God sends messengers into cities and how He feels compassion for the people who live there. But that's not all! God is also an expert in giving cities a makeover. Do you remember the story of Saul of Tarsus?

One day, Saul was on his mission to persecute Christians and heading to Damascus to do his thing. But wait, here's the interesting part: Jesus Himself appeared to him on the way and completely changed his life! The story is in Acts 9:1-6. Saul, who used to be the worst enemy of Christians, transformed into Paul, one of the most important apostles of all time.

Imagine this: Saul, the persecutor of Christians, became a guy who planted churches everywhere and became a great teacher of the gospel. God Upgraded Saul to someone completely different.

What does this teach us? God has immense power to transform not only individuals but also entire cities. When His grace is in action, everything can change. If you ever think your city needs a change, remember that God is the expert in transforming people and things. He is an artist in action, making everything better!

### **Conclusion**

God has a special love for cities. Throughout the Bible, we've seen how He shows His love in incredible ways: He sends messages, He is super understanding, and He even changes extremely sinful cities. As young people of God, it is our duty to love our cities and expand the Kingdom of God within them. Always remember that God is very active in our cities, and we can be



instruments of His love and compassion. Let's pray for God's love to continue flowing and transforming our cities.

**Devotional: A Different Point of View**  
**By: Maria Manderson**

Bible Text: Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

According to [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, and in terms of absolute numbers, irreligion appears to be increasing (along with secularization generally). And to top it off, the American Religious Identification Survey gives Wicca (spiritualism) an average annual growth of 143% for the period 1990 to 2001.

So, what does the Christian young person do? How do we share the gospel with these and other groups? Let's look at three encounters in the Bible with people of other faith groups.

**BE INTENTIONAL:**

**God Calls Abraham**

In both the Old and New Testaments, we see God being intentional in calling people, disciple, through whom He would reach people. When God called Abraham (then called Abram) in Genesis 12:1, He told him to leave his country, his family and his parent's house. Everything familiar had to be left behind, and that included his religion. *"Indeed, He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'"* (Isaiah 49:6) What a transformation, from idol worshipper, Abram to *Friend of God*, Abraham. Read Joshua 24:2 and Isaiah 41:8. This friendship between God and Abraham was not based on anything Abraham did; instead, it was based on God's everlasting covenant with Abraham and Abraham's faith in accepting it.

**Jesus and the Samaritan Woman**

In the encounter with the woman at the well, we see Jesus being intentional in taking the journey to get to the woman and to share the Good News with her. When the disciples went away to buy food, Jesus used the opportunity to speak to the woman. (John 4:8) She was seeking the next best thing. She desired a fulfilled life that cannot be found in another person (or thing). Jesus took the time to gently speak with her and engage her. We too must be intentional in reaching others. He did not embarrass her, instead Jesus gently pointed out her sin, which in turn caused her eyes to be opened to the truth of who He is. And Jesus is revealed. Read John 4:18-26.

Her sins did not shock Jesus. Our sins do not shock Jesus. It is only through Jesus that we can be saved from our sins.

God was always concerned about extending His love and forgiveness to ALL NATIONS and PEOPLES OF THE EARTH. And as Jeremiah 29:11 states, God know the plans He has for you and EVERYONE ELSE, also. And they are plans to prosper us, not to harm us. Plans to give us hope and a future. That means all of us. EVERYONE!

**Prayer:** Dear God, we thank you so much that you were intentional in reaching us. Thank you very much for loving us so much that you want us all to live with You forever. Please remind me that you can save everyone, no matter what the circumstances. Remind us, remind me that we cannot overcome our sins on our own, but we need you. Please open my eyes and show me ways you would like me to share your love with others, especially those who do not accept that you are our Saviors and you died to make us live again. Help me to be bold and share your Good News with everyone I meet, by what I say and how I live. Amen.

## Sermon 2

### Transforming Cities: Following the Example of Jesus

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Matthew 9:35, NIV)

#### Introduction

Today, we are going on a spiritual journey inspired by Jesus, exploring how we can carry out effective missionary work in cities. Let's imagine a bustling city full of challenges, similar to what Jesus faced in His time. But before we dive into this exciting topic, let me share a short story.

A few years ago, in the heart of a great city, lived a young man named David. Amidst the constant hustle and bustle of the city, David felt overwhelmed by the lack of hope and purpose he observed in the lives of many people around him. However, one day, David experienced an encounter that would change the course of his life forever. He crossed paths with an elderly man named Elijah, who shared with him the story of Jesus' ministry in the cities. The elderly man took his Bible and read the Gospel of Matthew 9:35:

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people."

David paid attention as Elijah explained that this verse highlighted three key actions that Jesus performed for the benefit of the cities, represented by the three main verbs in that verse.

#### Development

##### 1. First Verb: Teach

Let's start with the first crucial verb: "teach." Jesus spent time sharing His wisdom with the crowds in the cities. In Matthew 9:35, it says, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues." However, His teaching wasn't limited to words; it was also reflected in the way He lived His life. His life conveyed lessons of love, compassion, justice, and faith.

Now, let's continue with David's story. After his encounter with Elijah and his newfound passion for following in Jesus' footsteps, David felt compelled to do something truly significant. Instead of being swept away by the city's routine and superficial distractions, he decided to take action. One afternoon, while strolling through the city park, David came across a group of young people discussing spirituality and religion. Intrigued, he approached and began to listen. These young people were eager to learn more about God and the Bible. David was impressed by their genuine interest in delving deeper into their faith.

Motivated by these young people's desire to learn, David volunteered to be their mentor. He shared what he had learned and helped them navigate the challenges of city life from a spiritual

perspective. Additionally, he shared online resources on spiritual topics and recommended books and podcasts that had enriched his own spiritual understanding.

Young city missionaries, take inspiration from what Jesus did and from David's experience. It's time to take action and make a difference in your city! Here are some tips:

- *Organize Bible Study Groups:* Gather your friends or even people you don't know and organize Bible study groups in welcoming places like cafes or parks. It's not just about reading the Bible but exploring what it means in everyday life.
- *Be Mentors:* Become mentors for other young people who need spiritual guidance. Help them navigate life's ups and downs, share your experiences, and grow together in faith.
- *Share Resources:* Share books, podcasts, and online materials that have impacted you and that discuss God and salvation in a relevant and engaging way for today's youth. Think about what you would like and share it enthusiastically.

Remember that teaching is not just about imparting information; it's about being a role model for others! Show love, compassion, and faith in your daily life, and you'll see how your light shines in the city. Ready to make a mark in your community? The time is now Young Adults!

## **2. Second Verb: Preach**

Now, let's move on to the second key verb: "preach." Look at Jesus; He was truly a master at this. He not only shared His wisdom but also eagerly told everyone the most exciting news in history: the Kingdom of God was here, full of hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation!

Do you remember our friend David, the young man who once felt lost in the city and searched for purpose in life? After his encounter with Elijah and his new passion for following in Jesus' footsteps, David felt compelled to do something truly important.

One day, while David was at his school, he had a perfect opportunity to put the verb "preach" into practice. His teacher, who identified as an atheist, asked David why he believed in God. Right then and there, in front of all his classmates, David spoke with courage and conviction about the reasons he had faith in God. He explained the wonder of creation and how the Bible had a transformative impact on his life. The group of students listened attentively to every word David said, and even the teacher was impressed by the firmness of his convictions!

After speaking for about ten minutes, David took a deep breath and shared the amazing story of Jesus and how his faith in Him had transformed his own life. He spoke of the hope and forgiveness found in God, and how reconciliation can change everything.

He did it with bravery but also with humility and love. He didn't try to impose his faith but shared the truth in an authentic and respectful way. David's passion and genuine love shone through his words.

David's preaching brought hope to those young people who listened. Just like Jesus, David proclaimed the good news with courage and love, and in that moment, he made a difference in the city's school.

So, boys and girls, "preaching" is not just about speaking from a pulpit but finding everyday opportunities to share God's love with those around us. Let's follow Jesus and David's examples and let the good news shine in our city. You too can be bearers of hope and change in daily life!

### **3. Third Verb: Heal**

The third crucial verb on our spiritual journey is "heal." Jesus didn't just teach and preach; He also healed the sick and comforted the afflicted! In the Gospel of Matthew 9:35, it tells us that "He healed every disease and sickness among the people." But remember, it's not just about curing physical ailments; it also refers to healing spiritual and emotional wounds. That's an essential part of our mission in the city.

Let's return with David. After listening to the young people, he came to understand the importance of healing. One day, after delving into the study of the Bible, David felt in his heart that God was calling him not only to teach and preach but also to serve in a more tangible way.

David noticed that in his city, there were many homeless people in need of food and clothing, and there were also elderly individuals who rarely received visitors. He decided to speak with his church pastor and express his desire to get involved in a service group. The pastor informed him about a group of church members who had a ministry of providing food to the homeless.

David didn't hesitate for a moment and joined this group. Every Saturday, after church service, he joined his fellow members in preparing around two hundred meals and then went out to distribute them on the city streets. This work filled David's heart with joy, and this is where he understood one of the ways we can fulfill the verb "heal."

Healing doesn't just mean treating the sick; it also means taking care of those in need. It's about providing food, clothing, and assistance to the homeless, visiting the sick in hospitals, spending time with the elderly in city nursing homes, visiting the widows, showing love to the orphans, it's about doing what you can for those who are marginalized in your city.

Like Jesus, David understood that healing goes beyond the physical; it's about touching hearts and alleviating the burdens of those who are afflicted. And so, like all of us, David found a powerful way to fulfill the "heal" verb in the city.

So, young *City Missionaries*, let's follow Jesus and David's example. Let's look for opportunities to serve the needy. You can make a difference in the city through your actions filled with love and compassion!

### **Conclusion**

David, the young man in our story, followed Jesus' example in his city. He learned to teach, preach, and heal, and his missionary work transformed the lives of many people. Today, as young missionaries in the cities, we have the same opportunity to be agents of change. ***Remember that***

*following Jesus' example involves teaching with wisdom, preaching with love, and healing with compassion.* By doing so, we can be instruments of transformation in our cities, bringing hope and God's love to those who need it most. Let this mission be our passion and commitment. Amen.

## **Bridging Generational Gaps: A Devotional for Unity in Diverse Urban Communities**

**By: Ivonne Omaña**

In the dynamic and diverse cities of our world, people of all ages coexist, each carrying their unique experiences and wisdom. Our call as ministers is to connect generations, fostering understanding and unity. Today, let's draw inspiration from both Scripture and current data, learning how to minister effectively to the young and old, just as Jesus did.

Scripture Passage: 1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV)

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."

In the bustling and ever-changing urban landscapes, it's essential to recognize the beautiful diversity of age groups that make up our communities. The Bible's teachings, exemplified by individuals from various generations whom Jesus ministered to, provide a timeless guide to uniting the young and old.

### 1. Embracing Youthful Energy:

Recent data shows that young people bring vibrancy and innovation to urban environments. They are often at the forefront of social change, advocating for justice and equity. Just as Jesus welcomed the children and their enthusiasm (Matthew 19:14), let us embrace the youthful energy and passion in our communities. Encourage the young to set an example in their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

### 2. Valuing Wisdom and Experience:

On the other end of the age spectrum, older adults bring invaluable life experiences and wisdom. According to current studies, they often play significant roles as caregivers and mentors in families and communities. Just as Jesus engaged with figures like Nicodemus and Simeon, who were elderly but spiritually vibrant, let us value the wisdom of the older generations.

### 3. The Power of Intergenerational Connection:

Research indicates that intergenerational relationships can lead to improved mental health and overall well-being for all age groups. When the young and old come together, the benefits are profound. In Luke 2:36-38, we encounter Anna, an elderly prophetess who saw the infant Jesus. Her presence highlights the significance of intergenerational connections.

### 4. Following Jesus' Example:

Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated inclusivity by embracing people of all ages. From the children who gathered around Him to the elders who sought His counsel, His message was universal. He exemplified the power of love, empathy, and understanding, transcending generational gaps.

In our urban communities, bridging generational gaps is not just a challenge but also an opportunity for growth and unity. By drawing wisdom from Scripture and contemporary data, we can minister effectively to both the young and old. Let us appreciate the unique strengths each generation brings and foster connections that reflect Jesus' love. Together, we can build thriving



communities where everyone, regardless of age, finds purpose, belonging, and a shared journey of faith.

Prayer,

We gather before You today, grateful for the richness of diversity in our urban communities, where the young and old coexist. As we reflect on Your timeless Word and the wisdom of our times, we seek Your guidance in bridging generational gaps. Lord, empower us to embrace the energy and passion of the young, encouraging them to set an example in love, faith, and purity. Help us to honor the wisdom and experience of our elders, recognizing their invaluable contributions. May our interactions reflect Your love and inclusivity, just as Jesus ministered to all ages. Bind us together in unity, creating communities of purpose, belonging, and faith.

Amen.

## **Sermon 3:**

### **Facing Loneliness in Your City**

**By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira**

**(John 16:32)**

#### **Introduction**

Loneliness in cities is a growing issue worldwide. With the urbanization trend and changes in family dynamics, many people feel a deep sense of loneliness. In recent decades, the urban population has surged. In 2020, according to the UN, over 55% of the world's population lived in cities, and this trend is expected to continue. Ironically, despite the density of people in cities, a significant portion of the population experiences loneliness. A survey by the American Red Cross found that over 20% of adults in the United States often or always feel lonely.

Loneliness is not evenly distributed and affects certain groups more profoundly. The elderly, newcomers to the city in search of opportunities, workaholics, and those with demanding jobs often bear the brunt of this loneliness. Loneliness is not merely physical isolation; it's also feeling disconnected and isolated from others, which can lead to serious issues like depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

#### **Development**

##### **I. The Problem of Loneliness**

Loneliness is something we have all experienced at some point, haven't we? It's that sinking feeling in your stomach when someone you care about is far away or when you believe no one cares about you. But it's essential to understand that being alone is not the same as feeling lonely. Sometimes, being alone is perfectly fine. Even Jesus Himself would retreat to quiet places to pray or spend time with His friends (Matthew 14:13; Mark 1:35; 6:31). Some people spend a lot of time alone but don't feel lonely. For example, a scientist engrossed in research or an artist creating a masterpiece can be alone but not feel lonely.

Being alone is more of a physical state, like when you choose to be alone for a while. But feeling lonely is emotional; it's when you feel disconnected, isolated, or lacking a meaningful connection with someone else. Sometimes, being alone can be good, such as when you need time to think or pray in silence.

Loneliness, on the other hand, usually feels bad. It can follow sad events like the loss of a loved one, divorce, severe illness, or problems like unemployment. We may all experience loneliness at some point in life because we all need relationships with other people, and sometimes those relationships get damaged or fail. When we feel lonely after a painful experience, that's when we truly need the support of someone we can trust.

##### **II. The Remedy for Loneliness**

The issue of loneliness is repeatedly addressed in the Bible. Did you know that the word "alone" appears around 118 times in the Bible, but it rarely means feeling "lonely"? Here's another interesting fact: the word "loneliness" didn't even have its current meaning until recently, in this century, and it didn't appear in any major dictionary until after World War II. In other words, the concept of feeling lonely as a mental state is relatively new.

When we read the Bible, we find a crucial point at the beginning: God never intended for humans to live alone. After God created the world in seven days, it says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). But there was one thing God didn't find good: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). If we pay attention to the Genesis 1 account, we notice that animals were created in groups: "birds" (Genesis 1:19), "fish" (Genesis 1:21), and "animals" (Genesis 1:25). But the human, was created alone (Genesis 1:26). However, it wasn't God's plan for us to live that way forever. God knew that loneliness was not good for us, so He decided to create a suitable companion. Thus, in Genesis 2:22, the Bible tells us that God created woman from man's rib. Then, God blessed them and gave them a command: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the Earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:27-28 NIV).

As you can see, loneliness was not part of God's original plan for humanity. We are social beings. We were made to commune with God and others. We were born with the innate ability to create social bonds.... these social bonds with our Creator and fellow humans are essential to our survival. But sin disrupted that plan, and now we feel lonely and disconnected from God and others.

So, when we talk about loneliness, we need to understand that it affects us on two significant levels. First, spiritually. The initial level of loneliness people experience is spiritual loneliness. As mentioned earlier, God created us for a relationship with Him. But unfortunately, many people live estranged from God and feel spiritually lonely. That's why, despite being surrounded by people and having everything they want, they feel lonely. They don't realize that neither money nor possessions can fill that void in their lives. Spiritual loneliness can only be filled through a personal connection with God.

When you have a relationship with God, you can be physically alone but not feel lonely. Consider the case of Joseph: he was sold as a slave, separated from his family and friends, taken to an unfamiliar place where he didn't speak the language or understand the customs. In short, he was alone in the human sense. But the Bible says, "The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered" (Genesis 39:2 NIV). Even though he was alone, he wasn't lonely.

Likewise, Jesus, in the final days of His earthly life, was abandoned by His friends. Like Joseph, He was sold for a price. Almost everyone who had followed Him left. At one point, Jesus said, "A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me" (John 16:32 NIV). What a harsh reality, isn't it? But He also said, "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

Then there's the apostle Paul, who, in a time of need, also found himself alone. He said, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me" (2 Timothy 4:16 NIV). Imagine how this champion of truth felt! The one who had founded many churches, preached to many people, and taught many things. In his darkest hour, he felt alone. But he could write, "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength" (2 Timothy 4:17 NIV). Paul, although physically alone, he was never lonely.

Like Joseph, Jesus, and Paul, you too, can have a special relationship with God. You can live and walk every day in His presence. If you have that relationship with God, you will enjoy His company in such a way that, even if you find yourself alone in a situation, you will never feel lonely.

Secondly, *loneliness is related to human relationships*. We call it "relational loneliness." Despite Adam initially having a perfect relationship with God he still felt the need for companionship from other human beings. God didn't ignore or minimize that need. Instead, He made someone to fulfill it. God knows that as human beings, we need companionship. Loneliness is like a warning signal: just as hunger tells you that you need food, loneliness tells you that you need companionship.

"Relational loneliness" is only cured when we build solid relationships with others. And you know what? There's a place where you can do that! Of course, you can do it within your family, at work, at school, or in support groups. But one of the best ways is within the church.

Let me explain something before we continue. When the Bible talks about the church, it doesn't refer to a building but to a group of believers who have been saved by the grace of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9). So, when we examine what the Bible says about the church in the New Testament, we notice that it's about a community of Christians who care for each other, love each other, host each other, welcome each other, serve each other, teach each other, forgive each other, support each other, and help each other in many ways. In short, they are a team that's always there for one another.

### Conclusion

In summary, ***God doesn't want you to feel lonely***. You can connect with Him and others, and thus, never feel alone. During one of our gatherings, a young woman who had been struggling with depression and anxiety for years walked in. She had very few friends and spent most of her time alone in her apartment. She hardly went out, only for work and to the nearest store to buy essentials. She said life was a senseless maze, and loneliness was her constant companion.

But one day, through a co-worker, she received an invitation to attend one of our church services. At first, she made excuses repeatedly, but her friend insisted so much that she finally said, "Well, I'll go just once to give it a try." So, she came to church one Saturday and spent almost the entire day with us. She shared a delicious lunch, and in the afternoon, she went out with a group of church members to provide food to those in need. According to her, that day was something special. It had been years since she had felt so welcomed anywhere.

The next week, she decided to come back. The young people invited her to a social gathering at one of their homes, and she accepted. What she witnessed surprised her: people were enjoying

life in a healthy way, without the need for alcohol or drugs. She couldn't believe it. She felt accepted and valued. Furthermore, she began receiving weekly text messages with inspirational Bible verses. A group of girls included her in their special prayers. Literally, she had no time to feel lonely.

Six months after her first visit, she decided to be baptized. Before her baptism, she shared her testimony and said that the love she had received from the church's children, young people, and adults had helped her overcome loneliness. Today, she is completely free, has left behind her smoking and drinking habits entirely, but most importantly, she enjoys a special relationship with God and with others.

So, young people, I share this story to tell you that there are many people in the city who feel just as lonely as this young lady did before she encountered our church. They may be struggling with things like depression and anxiety, but genuine friendship can make a significant difference in their lives.

The invitation is to seek out those who feel lonely, lend a helping hand, and show them the love and joy you have found in Jesus. You don't know how much impact you can have on someone's life.

Are you willing to take up this challenge?

Let's make our city a less lonely place for everyone. Together, we can make a difference!

## **Finding Healing and Hope** **By Ivonne Omaña**

"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." - Psalm 34:17-18 (NIV)

In the bustling cities of the world, amidst the noise and chaos, there are hearts burdened by invisible struggles - mental health challenges that often go unnoticed. During the urban rush, God's presence shines brightest in the lives of those who wrestle with mental health challenges. The bible reveals that even those faithful to God faced moments of despair, anxiety, and overwhelming circumstances.

### **Elijah: Overcoming Isolation and Despair**

Elijah, a powerful prophet of God, faced a time of deep desolation and mental anguish. In 1 Kings 19, we find him fleeing from threats and collapsing beneath the weight of his burdens. However, amid his struggles, God met him in a gentle whisper, assuring him that he was not alone. Just as God provided sustenance, comfort, and purpose for Elijah, He walks alongside us in our darkest moments, bringing comfort and direction.

### **David: Finding Strength in Vulnerability**

King David, a man after God's own heart, poured out his emotions and vulnerabilities in the Psalms. In Psalm 42, David expressed his longing for God amid his inner turmoil. Yet, his honesty paved the way for a renewed sense of trust and hope in God's unfailing love. We too can lay bare our hearts before the Lord, confident that He hears our cries and provides the strength to endure.

### **Paul: Transformed by Grace**

The Apostle Paul, renowned for his unwavering faith, also spoke of his thorn in the flesh - a struggle that caused him great distress. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul shares how God's grace sustained him, teaching him the power of Christ's strength in weakness. Just as God's grace transformed Paul, it continues to work in us, offering solace and strength to navigate the challenges of mental health can present in.

### **We Can Be Anchored in Hope.**

Our struggles do not define us; they are a part of our journey. Just as the dawn follows the darkest night, hope shines through our difficulties. The Bible is filled with promises of restoration, renewal, and healing. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God has plans for our future, plans filled with hope. Let us cling to these promises as we navigate the challenges of mental health.

As we minister to those facing mental health challenges in the cities of the world, let us remember that the Bible is a testament to God's compassion and understanding. Through the stories of Elijah, David, Paul, and countless others, we witness how God's light shines brightest in our moments of weakness. Ask yourself, how can we extend a hand of compassion and offer assurance to those struggling with mental health problems? How can we show them they are not alone?

Prayer:

Lord, I pray that you guide us in the path of compassions and patience. Help us reach those that are struggling with their own challenges and provide a sense of love and hope. Just as God met the broken and the weary with grace and hope, may we be vessels of His love, bringing healing and restoration to the hearts that need it most. Help us feel your presence and guidance wherever we go so as to help those that need you.

## Sermon 4:

### Facing Depression in Your City

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Psalm 40:2)

#### Introduction

Let's meet Ana, a young woman who has lived her entire life in the city. She loves everything exciting and vibrant that urban life offers: the culture, the food, and the job opportunities. But lately, something isn't right. The activities that used to excite her and the fulfilling social relationships now seem tired and meaningless.

About a year ago, Ana started feeling a profound sadness that wouldn't go away. She would wake up in the morning feeling exhausted, even though she had spent the entire night in bed. Work became an unbearable burden, and she struggled to concentrate on tasks she used to enjoy. Her friends noticed she was withdrawing and no longer had the desire to go out or socialize. The thought of facing city traffic to meet friends filled her with anxiety.

Furthermore, Ana noticed changes in her appetite. Sometimes, she would overeat to try to fill an emotional void, while at other times, she had little appetite and was losing weight. Sleep became a constant battle as she fought against insomnia and woke up in the middle of the night with negative thoughts.

Finally, after months of silently carrying this burden, Ana decided to seek help. She went to see a therapist and began talking about her feelings of sadness, anxiety, and hopelessness. The therapist diagnosed her with clinical depression and suggested a treatment plan.

#### I. The Problem of Depression

Depression is like a dark cloud that doesn't easily dissipate and can affect anyone, young people like you and me. It can make you feel sad, and disinterested in things you used to enjoy, and it can make you feel guilty or worthless. It can also affect your sleep and appetite, leaving you with little energy.

There are different types of depression, such as:

- **Situational Depression:** This occurs due to stressful situations like the loss of a loved one or financial problems. It may disappear once the situation improves.
- **Seasonal Depression:** Some people feel sadness at certain times of the year, such as in winter when there is less sunlight.
- **Melancholic Depression:** Here, symptoms are severe. You would feel disinterested in all activities, lose a lot of weight, could be agitated or very slow, and feel guilty.
- **Psychotic Depression:** This is even more complicated, with hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that don't exist) or delusions (false and fixed beliefs). This adds an additional layer of complexity to the illness.



- **Major Depressive Disorder:** This is the most common form, where deep sadness, lack of interest in things, changes in appetite and sleep, and other symptoms affect daily life.

Cities can be a breeding ground for depression due to stress, lack of contact with nature, pollution, and other reasons, like out topic yesterday, loneliness. These factors can affect many people in urban environments, and it's essential to be aware of how they impact our mental health.

Depression affects both youth and adults. According to statistical reports, more than 20% of teenagers worldwide suffer from mental disorders.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Depression in the Bible

Although we often associate depression with modern medical science, its roots are found in the ancient past, even in biblical accounts. The Bible has episodes of revered figures who faced moments of deep sadness and despair. Through these stories, we can explore how faith, hope, and a connection to the Divine can be resources for facing depression and finding the path to recovery. Let's look at some examples:

### 1. David: A Man After God's Own Heart

David, known as a "man after God's own heart," experienced periods of deep sadness and distress. His Psalms are a touching testimony to his emotional struggles. In Psalm 42, David writes, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God" (Psalm 42:11, adaptation).

In this passage, David acknowledges his distress but also finds strength in his faith to seek hope and divine help. This teaches us that even in the midst of despair, faith can be a guiding light for those struggling with depression.

### 2. Jeremiah: The Weeping Prophet

Jeremiah, known as the "weeping prophet," is another biblical example of someone who experienced profound sadness. His book, the Book of Lamentations, is filled with expressions of pain and anguish over the calamities he witnessed. Amid his suffering, Jeremiah writes, "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end" (*Lamentations* 3:21, adaptation).

Despite the desolation surrounding Jeremiah, his ability to reflect and find hope within his heart is a reminder that even in the darkest moments, self-examination and hope can lead to spiritual recovery.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mexico/comunicados-prensa/m%C3%A1s-del-20-de-los-adolescentes-de-todo-el-mundo-sufren-trastornos-mentales>

### 3. Elijah: A Prophet Exhausted

The prophet Elijah is another biblical character who faced depression. After a great victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah felt overwhelmed by exhaustion and fear and wished for death. However, in his desperation, he experienced a special connection with God through a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12).

Elijah's story teaches us that even in the lowest moments of depression, the divine presence can be a source of strength and spiritual renewal.

### III. The Path to Overcoming Depression

Dear young person, someone you know, or even yourself, may be struggling with depression in your city. Here are some tips that can help in this situation:

- **Prayer and Seeking God's Presence:** Prayer can be a way to find comfort, hope, and strength during depression.
- **Community and Spiritual Support:** Interaction with other believers and the support of the Christian community can be crucial. Participating in a congregation, support group, or faith community can provide a sense of belonging and emotional support.
- **Reading and Meditating on Scripture:** Reading the Bible and meditating on passages that deal with hope, strength, and overcoming challenges can be helpful.
- **Seeking Christian Counseling:** A Christian counselor or pastor trained in counseling can provide spiritual and emotional guidance specific to depression from a biblical perspective.
- **Practicing Forgiveness and Gratitude:** Learning to forgive others and oneself can be a liberating process.
- **Avoiding Isolation:** Actively seeking the company of friends and loved ones in the faith can be beneficial.
- **Seeking Professional Help When Necessary:** Depression is a real illness, and in many cases, professional treatment such as therapy or medication is needed.
- **Embracing God's Grace and Love:** Remembering God's love and grace can help alleviate the guilt or shame associated with depression.

### Conclusion

There are thousands of young people and adults in your city struggling with depression. It's time to offer them hope. It's time to tell them that ***God has the power to lift them out of the pit of despair.*** Dear young person, if you or someone you know is battling depression, seeking help both in the spiritual and medical realms may be the best way to address the situation. There are elder and deacons who are ready to help you and give you resources to locate a mental health specialist. The devil wants nothing more than to kill, steal and destroy your life, BUT God has come so that you have an abundant life. God wants life for you, and we also want life for you. Ask for help!

Be brave, and together, let's confront the issue of depression in your city.

**My poor riches**  
**By. Ivonne Omaña**

Bible Verse: When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. - Matthew 19:25-26

When it comes to sharing the gospel with others, there is a particular group of people that brings fear and skepticism in most of us and those are the rich and wealthy. Luckily for us that attitude towards this group of people has been there since Jesus was with his disciples walking the roads of Judea. The best example to describe the attitude that people have about sharing the news of salvation with the wealthy is described in the story about the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19: 16-26. This ruler was rich, and the Bible says that Jesus asked him to leave all his earthly possessions and follow Him, *the young ruler went away sad, because he was very rich* Matthew 19:22.

What is more surprising and a reflection of our modern perception about sharing the gospel with rich people is the reaction that the disciples had after the young ruler left and rejected the invitation of the Savior. They asked Jesus: “*How can anyone ever be saved?*” v.25 but Jesus gave the perfect response to such a faithless question, “there are some things people cannot do, but God can do anything” v.26 That is at the center of any evangelistic outreach meant to share the gospel with the rich especially in this modern society.

What we see as something impossible, God has no limits and to achieve with success what we humans perceived as impossible. God is just waiting for us to make the first move and consider this group as people that can be saved. I recently watch a clip from a story that had a very successful and wealthy couple. With hard work and ingenuity, they had built a multimillion-dollar toy company. They owned several mansions that had anything that you could ever imagine. They had a beautiful family and from the outside you would think that they had no needs. Then as the couple sat down to discuss the success of their company the reporter asked the women about her feelings towards life and success, and she shared that since she was 5 years old, she felt an emptiness in her soul that she kept from everyone else including her husband and business partner for over 40 years. She felt like life had no meaning. She didn't care her life was surrounded by material possessions she wanted to fill the void in her soul. We have to recognize that this group of people have the need of a Savior.

The apostle Paul delighted in the opportunity to share the gospel in the court of Agrippa's and other dignitaries. Daniel and his Jewish friends were an example of faith and loyalty to God in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. Joseph did the same in ancient Egypt while serving Pharaoh. Because of the boldness of the young slave in Naaman's home he was eventually cured and became to know and love the God of Israel. In this modern society we must seek the opportunities to share the gospel with the rich. Jesus came to save anyone who believes in Him. What might seem impossible for men, is really possible for God. Let's ask God with an open heart to reach these people that are in desperate need of a Savior.

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray with open hearts, guided by the lesson from Matthew 19:25-26. We know that sharing the gospel with the rich can be challenging, but we remember that with you, anything is possible. Like the disciples who wondered if anyone could be saved, we may doubt our ability to reach the wealthy. However, history shows us that you can touch the lives of even those who seem beyond reach. Just as people like Paul, Daniel, and Joseph brought your message to powerful leaders, help us find opportunities to share your love with the rich in our world today. Let us see them as individuals who also need a Savior. Give us the courage, wisdom, and kindness to bring your word to them, knowing that what appears difficult for us is achievable for you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## **Sermon 5**

### **Facing Diseases in Your City**

**By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira**

**(3 John 2)**

#### **Introduction:**

In the heart of a bustling and famous city, urban life never came to a halt. The streets were always filled with people in a hurry, and skyscrapers seemed to touch the sky like towers of ambition. But beneath all that modern luxury and appearance hid invisible dangers.

One cold winter morning, rumors began to circulate about a disease that no one understood. People felt like they had a deadly flu, with crazy fevers, difficulty breathing, and relentless coughs. At first, no one paid much attention because, of course, colds and flus were common in such a densely populated city, right?

However, the disease started spreading alarmingly. Hospitals filled up in no time, and doctors were busier than streaming servers. Health authorities issued a red alert and began investigating what was happening with this disease. Public health experts analyzed how it was spreading and discovered that the disease was linked to a somewhat "exotic" food market in the city center, where they sold uncommon animals.

Panic gripped the city when they confirmed that the disease was a new version of a virus that could jump from animals to humans. So, they made a move and declared a quarantine, putting the entire city on standby! They closed down that strange market in a flash, but it was already too late to completely halt the disease. Thousands of people were infected, and the mortality rate soared.

The city plunged into total chaos. The once bustling streets turned into something out of a post-apocalyptic movie set. People stayed in their homes out of fear, businesses closed their doors, and the economy took a 180-degree turn. Hospitals were on the brink of collapse, and doctors worked as if there were no tomorrow to care for the sick.

Although it sounds like this account is pure fiction, we know this to be true. Life in a city can be more fragile than it seems, and it is crucial that we be prepared and cooperate when facing diseases in modern cities.

#### **Development**

##### **I. Diseases in Cities**

Diseases in cities are a complex issue tied to urban life and people's health. Let's look at some of the main causes of this problem:

- **Air Pollution:** In several cities, the air we breathe is a significant problem due to the high number of cars, factories, and other sources of pollution. This pollution can lead to respiratory problems like asthma, bronchitis, and even heart issues.
- **Water Pollution:** Water is crucial in cities, but it can lead to unpleasant consequences if not properly maintained. Waterborne diseases like cholera can spread if the pipes and purification systems are not in good condition.
- **Population Density:** In cities, people are packed together like sardines in a can, making infectious diseases more common. Influenza, COVID-19, and other illnesses can spread more easily in densely populated areas.
- **Limited Access to Healthcare Services:** While cities have hospitals and clinics everywhere, it's not always easy for everyone to access and receive care. Some people lack economic resources or live far from medical facilities, making it challenging to address illnesses.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Stress, anxiety, and depression are real concerns in cities. Urban life can be stressful due to job competition, traffic, social isolation, and other factors, contributing to mental health problems.
- **Nuisance Insects and Rodents:** In some cities, insects like mosquitoes and rodents can transmit diseases if not properly controlled. For example, dengue and other diseases can spread through bites or contact with these pests.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Many city dwellers lead sedentary lives due to office jobs and a lack of exercise spaces. This can lead to health issues like obesity and heart-related diseases.
- **Noise Pollution:** Constant noise in the city can cause high stress levels and disrupt sleep. This can affect blood pressure and rest, potentially leading to health problems.

## II. God and Health

The God of the Bible is a God of health. In 3 John 1:2, we find a powerful message: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." In God's original plan for humanity, disease was not on the radar. Can you imagine our first parents in such a healthy lifestyle? No pollution, in a healthy environment, eating nuts, grains, and natural fruits, without strange chemicals.

Ellen G. White, who wrote extensively on health, said that our first parents lived in perfect health. They were tall and good-looking as if taken from a photograph. Adam was much taller than people today, and Eve was slightly shorter but very beautiful and elegant.<sup>2</sup>

Adam and Eve embodied perfect health. They had physical, mental, and social health. Best of all, they were deeply connected to God, which gave them enviable spiritual health. However, this perfect health was disrupted. When Adam and Eve chose not to trust God and were expelled from paradise, everything changed, and diseases emerged in all areas.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2018), p. 45.3

Genesis 3 tells how the first couple succumbed to the enemy of God and turned their backs on their Creator. But despite the rebellion of our first parents, God still cares deeply about our health.

Out of His infinite love, God left us a promise that provides an opportunity to live healthy lives. Initially, God gave this promise to the Israelites during their journey through the desert, but we can also embrace it, as Romans 15:4 states: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (NKJV).

Look at the promise God gave Israel through Moses in Exodus 15:26: "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you" (NKJV).

In ancient times, the people of Israel had advanced health principles. It turns out that an ancient book called the "Ebers Papyrus," written by the Egyptians around 1500 BC, during Moses' time, was discovered by archaeologists. This book served as a guide to Egyptian health, although some of their ideas were quite bizarre. Let's look at some of the medical advice found in this papyrus, but seriously, don't try this at home!

For example, to prevent gray hair, they recommended rubbing black cat blood boiled in oil or rattlesnake fat into your hair. And if you didn't want to go bald, you had to use six types of fat: horse, hippopotamus, crocodile, cat, snake, and goat. You had to mix honey with donkey tooth powder to strengthen your hair. How about that?

If you had a splinter stuck, the medical prescription included "worm blood and donkey dung." Other strange advice involved "lizard blood, pig teeth, decomposed meat, moisture from pig ears, and even human, animal, and fly excrement." Can you imagine if your doctor gave you these tips today? What a madness! These were the "experts" of Moses' time.

Certainly, Moses must have been aware of these Ebers Papyrus writings because, according to the Scriptures, he learned all the knowledge of the Egyptians. But the interesting thing is that you won't find any of these strange recommendations in the Bible. Why? As we've already mentioned, the health laws God gave to His people were far more superior for their time.

For example, in the Middle Ages, Europe was plagued by the "Black Death." The plague killed one in every four people, and no one knew how to stop it because they didn't even understand microbiology as we do today. Do you know what saved them? The Bible! They finally turned to the Scriptures, specifically Leviticus 13:46, which says, "He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (NKJV). From the Bible, they learned about the importance of isolating the sick.

The Bible provides clear instructions on how to care for our health, not just physical health, but also emotional, sociocultural, and especially spiritual health.

What do you think?

## Conclusion

Dear young people, God wants you to be healthy and to share that health in your city. Did you know that God's medicine is more about prevention than cure? He left us with eight natural tips that can help you live energetic and well-balanced lives. Would you like to know what they are? Here they are, with the acronym FORWARD!

- **F for Fresh Air:** Start feeling great by flooding your bodies with fresh air, taking deep breaths during the day. Oxygen is essential for cells. The fresher the air you breathe, the more energy you'll have.
- **O for One's Control:** No excess, folks. Say no to tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, and addictive substances. But moderation and balance with the good things.
- **R for Rest:** Getting proper sleep is essential, meaning seven to eight hours in a well-ventilated room. Balance your life between work and rest.
- **W for Water and Workout:** Water, water, and more water. The best drink to purify and keep all your cells hydrated. Aim for six to eight glasses a day. Also, you need to activate your bodies with daily exercise, preferably outdoors if possible. A little walking, about half an hour, is a good start. Get moving, folks!
- **A is for Accepting God's Will:** Don't forget your spiritual life. Faith and trust in God enhance your health and bring joy. Spend time in church with your families, cultivating love and hope.
- **R for Right Nutrition:** Eat healthy foods with all the necessary nutrients and a touch of fiber. Balance is key to keeping your bodies at their best.
- **D is for Daylight:** A bit of sunlight boosts your mood and vitality. But in moderation, okay? Excessive sun exposure can be harmful. Best in the morning.

So, guys, move FORWARD with these healthy tips! Keep your bodies in good health.



**Don't let doubt deceive you.**  
**By: Maria Manderson**

Bible Text: James 1:5, 6

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."*

It was the evening of the resurrection. Ten of Jesus' closest friends were huddled together in a room, scared.... Judas had already killed himself, and Thomas (also known as Didymus) was not there. The Bible does not say why Thomas was missing, but we know it was only the ten of them. They had barricaded the door, just in case some of the people who had killed Jesus, came to kill them too. They were lonely, confused, dejected....and doubt began to creep into their hearts. What if they were wrong? What if Jesus was a fake? When suddenly Jesus appeared among them. The barricaded door was not enough to keep Jesus out; there He was, standing before them. Sometime later the disciples told Thomas what had happened, and Thomas, the skeptic that he had become, said he would only believe if he could see the nail prints in Jesus' hands and place his hands in the wound on His side. Sometime later they were all together again and Jesus appeared to them. But this time Jesus focused his attention on Thomas. Jesus gently tells him to, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don't be unbelieving. Believe." Are you a Thomas? Do you need to see the evidence?

Doubters/skeptics are oftentimes afraid of being misled and are usually aware of people who are not honest....and so they are suspicious of Christians. When sharing the Bible with people who do not believe, it is very important to be honest. In the above incident we see that Thomas was very honest about his feelings.

Let's look at another example in the Bible, John 6:42 (Easy-to-Read Version):

"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Here we see that the people asking the question had valid reasons to doubt, but like many skeptics and doubters, they answer their own question. When you are interacting with them you must give them objective answers because they have very strong opinions and beliefs on God and the Bible. They believe they know the truth. This mindset is sometimes very difficult to get through to.

In fact, even Jesus' disciples and closest friends experienced some doubts. We read that even after Christ rose from the dead and met His disciples in Galilee "some doubted." To reach these people with the gospel you will need to pray for God to show you exactly how and what to say to them. They need to see the evidence.

**Prayer:**

Dear heavenly Father, we thank you for your merciful kindness. We thank you Lord that we still have faith but help us to believe in You and to trust You even more. Where we have doubt, please help our unbelief.

“Have mercy on those who doubt.” – Jude 1:22

## Sermon 6

### Facing Hopelessness in Your City

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Colossians 1:27)

#### Introduction:

Imagine John, a young man who grew up in the heart of a massive city. From a young age, he experienced the challenges that come with city life. His parents worked long hours to make ends meet, but due to their demanding jobs, they couldn't always be present in his life.

As time went on, John entered adolescence and began to feel the brutal pressure of the city. At his school, the academic competition was fierce, and the pressure to get good grades was at its peak. Despite his efforts in studying, he sometimes felt overwhelmed by the workload and the expectations from his parents. He wondered if there was truly a future for him in that city.

In his community, safety issues were an everyday occurrence. Robberies and graffiti were common, and John had to walk through dark and partially destroyed streets when returning from school. He didn't feel safe or connected to his neighborhood, which made him feel even more lonely and discouraged.

As John grew older, he realized that his friends and schoolmates were also facing similar challenges. Many struggled with the stress of school, economic hardships, and the lack of clear plans in the city. They questioned whether they would ever break free from the cycle of stress and experience a brighter side of life.

#### Development:

The lack of hope in cities affects people all around the world. It essentially feels like there are no opportunities or a chance for things to get better, and it can be related to several causes.

- **Economic Inequality:** One of the strongest contributors to the lack of hope in cities is economic inequality. When there's a vast gap between the wealth and quality of life of different groups in the city, those at the bottom feel they have few opportunities for improvement.
- **Lack of Jobs:** Cities attract people in search of work and the promise of a better future, but when there aren't enough jobs, many are left in economic limbo, increasing the lack of hope.
- **Homelessness:** The lack of affordable housing or housing in good condition can be a significant factor in the lack of hope. If you don't have a safe and stable place to live, you feel like you have no control over your life.
- **Insecurity and Crime:** The sense of insecurity due to high crime levels or exposure to violence in the city also contributes to the lack of hope. Sometimes, you feel trapped in your neighborhood and are afraid to seek new opportunities.

Can the lack of hope in the city be overcome? Where can we find hope? The word "hope" appears many times in the Bible and is a recurring theme, highlighting its significance in faith and our relationship with God.

Take a look at some Bible verses about hope:

- **Romans 15:13 (NIV):** "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
- **Hebrews 11:1 (NIV):** "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."
- **Psalms 42:11 (NIV):** "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."
- **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV):** "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
- **1 Peter 1:3 (NIV):** "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

These verses will help us better understand hope. They are like an anchor that helps us stay steadfast in the midst of the storm. Just as a ship needs an anchor to avoid drifting, we need the following three truths to maintain hope.

### **Truth #1: The Bible - The Book of Hope:**

Romans 15:4 (NIV) tells us that "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope." The Bible is a treasure trove of hope. The Bible is filled with stories of people who faced challenges and obstacles but also experienced hope and divine redemption. God speaks to us through the Bible, offering us promises and words of encouragement that fill us with hope in the midst of difficult times.

To find hope, guidance, and comfort in the God's Word you must be consistent. You cannot just read it sometimes, if you have a little spare time and other times you do not read. You must prayerfully read and study the Word every day. It must become a daily habit. Additionally, share the stories of hope from the Bible with others to inspire and encourage those going through tough times.

### **Truth #2: Jesus - The Hope of Glory:**

Colossians 1:27 (NIV) tells us that "God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Jesus is the ultimate source of hope and represents divine glory. His life, death, and resurrection offer us the hope of reconciliation with God and the promise of eternal life. Faith in Jesus transforms our lives and fills us with the hope of attaining eternal glory with Him.

To maintain hope, it's crucial to develop a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer and reflection, experiencing His hope and transformation in our lives.

### **Truth #3: The Second Coming of Christ - Our Blessed Hope:**

Titus 2:13 (NIV) says, "while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." The promise that Jesus will return is a source of hope for believers. Knowing that Jesus will come back to establish His eternal kingdom fills us with anticipation and motivates us to live in holiness and preparedness. This hope gives us the strength to face current difficulties with the certainty of a glorious future.

In challenging times, always remember the promise of the second coming of Christ to find comfort and strength.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, **the Bible offers us an infinite source of hope. Jesus is the embodiment of the hope of glory, and the second coming of Christ is our blessed hope.** By embracing these truths and applying them in our daily lives, we can experience hope that transcends circumstances and guides us toward an eternal future with God.

Do you remember John? One day, he had the opportunity to attend an evangelistic conference in his city. The preacher talked about the importance of being strong, seeking opportunities, building a support network, and developing a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The speaker's words deeply impacted John, who began to seek ways to improve his situation.

Although the city still had its challenges, John began to see a glimmer of hope in his future. He realized that, with effort and the right support, he could overcome obstacles and pave the way for a better life. John's story reminds us that even in the toughest cities, hope and personal growth are possible when you seek support, opportunities, and open your heart to Jesus, the hope of glory.

## THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS WHAT MATTERS!!

By: Dr. Pako Mokgwane

**Proverbs 2:1-6**, My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> So that you incline your ear to wisdom, *And* apply your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup> Yes, if you cry out for discernment, *And* lift up your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup> If you seek her as silver, And search for her as *for* hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup> Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.

Cities are primarily inhabited areas of notable size, bigger than a town or village. Consequently, you would expect to experience the sight of many people, lots of cars, bright lights, tall buildings and hear lots of noises with very little or no agricultural activity, but what is critical for today's reading is the fact that cities have people. Among the inhabitants of cities are the well-educated. This is precisely because most organizations employ educated people. In addition, tertiary institutions are found in cities. So, the city is much more than a physical imprint on a map. It is a place where we see many different types of people, some of whom may be endowed richly with knowledge, information, concepts, and understanding. However, all these do not matter if one does not fear God!

Learned people are normal human beings with natural inclinations like us. The fact that they have reached the high echelons of education does not absolve them from the realities of life under the sun. Someone has got to reach out to them because the word of God is no respecter of person. It is like a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). It cuts across all stratas of the social pyramid. There is no human being who can safely say they don't need Jesus or any encouragement because of what they have. Besides, Jesus has sent us with the gospel of grace to all people (Revelation 14:6-12). Christ's method by Ellen White (Ministry of Healing, p.143) is worthy of emulation, "The Savior mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, 'Follow Me.'" Following this method, here are some practical ways of reaching the well-educated:

1. Belong to scholarly organizations so that you can get to know them and meet them.
2. Attend research conferences (Christian and non-Christian) to mingle with them.
3. Show sympathy by sharing in their sadness in their low moments.
4. Invite them to a health-expo or family fun day to minister to their needs.
5. Establish a center of excellence for children to win over their parents.
6. Speak from scientific evidence that is not against Bible truth to win their confidence.
7. Proclaim Christ to them through God's word and an authentic lifestyle.

Do it because you fear the Lord because it is all that matters. Do it to introduce the fear of the Lord to others because it is your duty.

### PRAYER

Dear Jesus, Today I choose to celebrate all types of people in my city. Please give me boldness, clarity of thought, nobility of character, and stability of purpose so that I may be everything to my educated brothers and sisters. I want to stand in the gap for your glory. Please open pathways for my influence. I need your wisdom to connect with people, mingle with them, show sympathy, minister to their needs, win their confidence and ultimately invite them to follow you. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

## Sermon 7

### Facing Fear in Your City

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Hebrews 11:1)

#### Introduction

When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President of the United States on March 4, 1933, the country was in turmoil due to the crisis, and it needed a dose of hope after over three years of decline. On that day, Roosevelt delivered a speech that is still talked about and mentioned in books and articles, for a phrase that resonates deeply: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

With those words, Roosevelt made it clear that the number one enemy was not the unstable economy but fear itself. Fear, as Cuban psychologist Mira Y. López put it, is a monster that sends shivers down your spine. Fear steals your thoughts and can hijack your dreams and willpower. It makes you forget what you know and lose sight of who you are. It makes you feel out of control and that you can never regain it. It makes you distrust the very people you should trust without hesitation. It makes you demanding rather than humble and serving. It makes you think that God is insignificant in the face of your problems and challenges. It makes you search in people for what you can only find in Jesus Christ.

#### Development

##### I. Fear in the Cities

Fear in cities is a complex phenomenon that affects both young and old and can be related to several contributing factors. Here are some of the main factors:

- **Crime and urban violence:** The perception of insecurity due to crime and violence in cities is one of the primary factors contributing to fear. Crimes such as robberies, assaults, and homicides can generate fear in the population, especially in areas with high crime rates.
- **Transportation problems:** Insecurity in public transportation, such as robberies or sexual harassment on trains or buses, can increase fear in cities. This can limit people's mobility and affect their quality of life.
- **Social and media pressure:** The constant spread of news about violent incidents and crimes in the media and on social networks can increase fear in society. Overexposure to scary stories can contribute to a distorted perception of safety in the city.
- **Distrust in institutions:** Lack of trust in government institutions responsible for maintaining security and public order can lead to increased fear. The perception of corruption or inefficiency can undermine the sense of security in the city.

Faced with the wave of fear that exists in cities, what can we do?



## II. Overcoming Fear with Faith

Although the Bible is not a psychology manual or a treatise on the brain, it delves deeply into the subject of fear. In fact, the phrase "do not be afraid" appears about 365 times in Scripture, making it the most repeated message throughout the Bible. Furthermore, the words "fear" and "terror" are mentioned over two hundred times, while "dread" appears over one hundred times. It might be surprising that a book recounting the deeds of historical figures talks so much about fear, but the Bible records that more than two hundred of its characters experienced it!

So, is there a solution to something as overwhelming as fear? Can we overcome our fears? Is it possible to live without fear? Many have sought answers through psychologists and therapies, trying to change their thinking and behavior logically. Others have turned to medication, viewing fear as a kind of illness. However, over time, they discover that, while these therapies and medications can help, they are not the only options.

If we cannot eliminate or ignore our fears, can we manage them in some way? The answer is a resounding "yes." According to the Bible, we can face and overcome fear through faith. Yes, dear young person, faith is the divine antidote to eliminate all our fears, but what is faith?

The Bible defines faith in this way: "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). In other words, faith is trusting in God. The Bible tells us later: "And without faith, it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, NIV).

It is important to note that not just any kind of faith overcomes fear. **The faith that truly conquers fear first accepts the existence of God.** Believing in God is the first step toward living a victorious life. Those who believe in God have a compass that guides them through the difficulties of this world. On the other hand, for those who do not believe in God, this world can seem strange, confusing, and discouraging. Life becomes complicated and directionless.

**Secondly, the faith that overcomes fear not only accepts the existence of God but also seeks to develop a special relationship with Him.** It is not enough to know that God exists; it is necessary to come to know Him. God Himself urges us in His Word not to boast of our wisdom, power, or wealth but to boast of knowing Him and understanding that He acts on earth with love, justice, and righteousness (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Before continuing, it is important to note that when we talk about knowing God, we don't mean comprehending Him fully. As human beings, we cannot fully grasp an infinite being due to our mental limitations, moral problems, and limitations in divine revelation. However, when we speak of knowing God, we refer to establishing a relationship with Him in such a way that what He is affects who we are.

**Third and finally, the faith that overcomes fear is one that leads us to trust God completely.** Someone once said that faith involves trusting that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The essence of true faith involves taking God's Word and trusting that He will fulfill His promises. When we trust in God, our perspective on life completely changes. Trust in God transforms everything. It frees us from the negative effects of the past and from negative emotions. By trusting that everything is in the hands of our Creator, we live without fear, knowing that nothing happens without His consent.

### **Conclusion**

Harriet Tubman was an incredible woman who lived in a time when slavery was a nightmare in the United States. Imagine being trapped, without freedom, living in constant fear. Harriet experienced that since she was a child, but she never gave up.

From a young age, Harriet experienced the cruelty of slavery. But as she grew, so did her determination to escape and help others do the same. Her secret: a powerful faith in God that gave her courage.

When she was 27 years old, Harriet made a brave decision. She escaped from the plantation where she was enslaved and ventured north, following the stars and trusting her intuition. On her journey, she faced dangers like slave hunters and tracking dogs, but her faith in God never wavered. Every step toward freedom was an act of faith.

But Harriet didn't stop after achieving her own freedom. Despite the constant risk of being captured and returned to slavery, she returned to the South several times to help other slaves escape through the Underground Railroad, a secret network of safe routes and hiding places. Her trust in God grew even stronger, firmly believing that God was guiding and protecting her in her dangerous missions.

Once, while leading a group of fugitive slaves in the middle of the night, they came across a wanted poster with her own face on it. Instead of giving up, Harriet prayed to God and pressed on, leading everyone to safety. Her faith and courage overcame fear.

Harriet Tubman, known as "the Moses of her people," helped more than three hundred slaves reach freedom. She became a true heroine in the fight against slavery. Her story demonstrates that faith in God can help you conquer fear and accomplish extraordinary things.

Today, dear young person, you may find yourself dealing with fear in your city due to insecurity, social pressure, and other challenges. However, like Harriet Tubman, **faith and determination can be your allies in overcoming these fears.**

**Who will respond?**  
**By: Mwenya Mpundu**

Verse: Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

On September 11, 2001, the world watched in horror as tragedy unfolded in New York City. Though I was just a six-year-old in Kenya then, I remember the scream I heard from the house while playing outside. The images on the TV screen displayed the towers crumbling, while a remarkable group of individuals rushed towards the chaos – the first responders. These brave souls often go unnoticed and demonstrate a profound love that defies danger and adversity.

In moments of danger, it's a natural instinct for most to seek safety, to move away from harm's way. Yet, in the midst of catastrophe, there are those who courageously move towards the epicenter of the crisis, not for fame or recognition but with an unwavering commitment to saving lives. Firefighters, Emergency Medical Personnel, Police Officers, and Military Personnel, collectively known as First Responders, venture into places where others dare not tread. Their mission? To save even just one life.

**1. Support through Prayer**

Amid the chaos and danger they confront, First Responders need our prayers. Let's make it a consistent practice to lift them up in prayer. Galatians 6:2 encourages us to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." Our prayers become a lifeline, providing them with strength and protection as they answer the call of duty.

**2. Recognize their Sacrifice**

It's crucial to recognize and honor the commitment of First Responders. In doing so, we reflect the love of God. Let us remember Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." Expressing our gratitude and acknowledging their sacrifice is a tangible reminder that their efforts do not go unnoticed.

**3. Encourage Mental Health Awareness**

Often perceived as the strong pillars of society, first responders are not immune to the toll of the traumatic events they witness. Just as we would "check on our strong friends," we must also extend our care to these heroes. Encourage them to seek mental health professionals who can help them process the weight of their experiences. Acknowledging their emotional needs offers a space for healing and support.

Questions: How can you actively support and appreciate those who selflessly serve your community?

Prayer: Loving God, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the courage of first responders. Strengthen them in their mission, grant them protection, and surround them with Your peace. May our support and prayers uplift their spirits. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Sermon 8

### Lifting Up the Fallen in Your City

By: Dr. S. Yeury Ferreira

(Matthew 11:19)

#### Introduction

Did you know that cities are filled with broken hearts? Some people who are going through tough times tend to fill their lives with a kind of darkness. In cities, we encounter young people who are trapped in the world of drugs, others who are under the influence of gangs, and some who are battling abuse and mistreatment. You can see young and old people who seem utterly lost, with no idea of which path to take. They are broken inside and are desperately seeking an opportunity to change.

Let us talk about the case of Maria, a twenty-five-year-old woman who lived in the heart of the big city. She had grown up in a difficult environment, surrounded by family problems and the negative influence of her friends. She began experimenting with drugs at a young age and soon found herself caught in a downward spiral. She lost her job, her relationships crumbled, and her health deteriorated rapidly. Maria was broken, both physically and emotionally.

#### Development

I would like to begin this reflection with a verse from the Bible that has always caught my attention:

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'" (Matthew 11:19 NIV).

Dear young people, have you ever wondered how they referred to Jesus? They called Him a "friend of sinners"! Can you imagine Jesus walking through your city? Who would He talk to? Towards whom would He show more sympathy? Undoubtedly, I believe He would approach those like Maria, those who have fallen and have broken hearts.

Now, what does it really mean for Jesus to be a friend of sinners? It means that He is our friend and is waiting for us to acknowledge His presence and willingness. God's love for us goes beyond what we can imagine.

It is interesting that the title "friend of sinners" was given to Jesus by the religious leaders of His time. They criticized Him for spending time with the marginalized and "socially unacceptable" people, and that is why they called Him a "friend of sinners"!

For example, on one occasion, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against Jesus. Do you know why? "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying **"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"** (Luke 15:1-2 KJV).

In the face of these criticisms, Jesus did not defend Himself but told a parable that illustrates how much God loves those who have fallen:

"Then He spoke this parable to them, saying: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.'" (Luke 15:3-7 NKJV).

Jesus talks about a shepherd who had a hundred sheep, but one of them strayed away and was lost. According to zoology, sheep are animals that stray and get lost easily due to their lack of a sense of direction. But the shepherd left the ninety-nine and made every effort to find the one lost sheep, even facing extreme weather conditions. Finally, with tenderness and love, he found the sheep and brought it back to the flock. Upon returning home, he celebrated his find with joy.

Christian writer Ellen G. White says that God, like an earthly shepherd, knows His sheep, scattered throughout the world.

"As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the Divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. "Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God." Jesus says, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." Ezekiel 34:31; Isaiah 43:1; 49:16. Jesus knows us individually and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus, the divine shepherd, goes through cities in search of the lost, the broken, and the fallen, those with broken hearts due to life's blows and traumas.

Why do I believe that Jesus lifts up the fallen?

- **He lifted up the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11):** He found a woman trapped in adultery, and instead of condemning her, He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her." The crowd dispersed, and Jesus told the woman that He did not condemn her and that she should sin no more.
- **He lifted up the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15):** On another occasion, Jesus found a man who had been sick and bedridden for 38 years. Jesus told him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and the man was instantly healed.
- **He lifted up Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10):** Zacchaeus was despised for his occupation and reputation as a sinner. When Jesus visited him, Zacchaeus was moved and decided to give half of his goods to the poor and restore fourfold to those he had defrauded.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), p. pp. 479, 479.3

In each of these examples, Jesus demonstrates His ability to lift up the fallen and offer them hope, regardless of their circumstances or past sins. He teaches us that there is always an opportunity for forgiveness, healing, and transformation in His presence.

### **Conclusion**

One day, while struggling with her addiction, Maria, encountered a group of volunteers from the Adventist Church who were helping vulnerable young people. One of them, Pablo, approached her with kindness and support. They offered her a safe haven and assistance in facing her problems. Despite her initial skepticism, Maria decided to give this helping hand a chance.

Over the following months, Maria began to rebuild her life. She received Bible studies and emotional support, counseling, and help to overcome her addiction. As she regained her confidence and skills, she also found employment and rebuilt healthy relationships with her family and friends. Today, Maria is a living testimony of how a second chance and a helping hand can change someone's life. Maria is an example that Jesus continues to lift up the fallen in cities. Dear young person, rise up and seek out the fallen in your city and introduce them to Jesus, who is the friend of sinners.